



*The Judiciary, State of Hawai'i*

**Testimony to the Thirty-First State Legislature, 2021 Regular Session**  
**Senate Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs**  
Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Chair  
Senator J. Kalani English, Vice Chair

Tuesday, March 16, 2021, 1:00 p.m.  
State Capitol  
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

by  
Judge Christine E. Kuriyama  
Senior Judge, Deputy Chief Judge  
Family Court of the First Circuit

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY**

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**Bill No. and Title:** House Bill No. 835, H.D.2, Relating to the National Guard Youth Challenge Academy

**Purpose:** Appropriates funds to support the ongoing operations of the Hawai'i National Guard Youth Challenge Program. Effective 7/1/3050 (HD2)

**Judiciary's Position:**

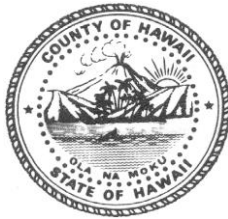
The Judiciary offers the following testimony in support of the bill:

1. The Hawai'i National Guard Youth Challenge Academy ("Youth Challenge") is a community-based program that provides and teaches life changing structure, education, values, and skills for "at promise" youth throughout the state of Hawai'i.
2. Youth Challenge has been a valuable partner of the Family Court across all islands. It provides the necessary services to divert "at promise" youth from the juvenile justice system and also serves as a much needed alternative to detention.
3. Based upon the foregoing, the Judiciary respectfully requests that the Legislature appropriate the necessary funds to support this essential program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

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## **OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY**

### **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 835 HD2**

#### **A BILL RELATING TO THE NATIONAL GUARD YOUTH CHALLENGE ACADEMY**

#### **COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, INTERGOVERNMENTAL, AND MILITARY AFFAIRS**

Senator Clarence Nishihara, Chair  
Senator J. Kalani English, Vice Chair  
Tuesday, March 16, 2021 at 1:00 p.m.  
Via Videoconference

Honorable Chair Nishihara, Vice-Chair English and Members of the Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental, and Military Affairs. The Office of the Prosecuting Attorney, County of Hawai'i submits the following testimony in support of House Bill No. 835 HD2.

The Hawai'i National Guard Youth Challenge Academy Hilo Campus (Youth Challenge) is the only public residential educational institution on the island of Hawai'i for youth (ages 16-18). The mission of Youth Challenge is to intervene in and reclaim the lives of "at promise" youth, producing program graduates with the values, life skills, education, and self-discipline necessary to succeed as productive citizens. In addition to getting a diploma, youth are educated and trained in the Eight Core Components of the academy's foundation including Academic Excellence, Life Coping Skills, Job Skills, Health & Hygiene, Responsible Citizenship, Service to Community, Leadership, and Physical Fitness. These components help mold these young men and women to be successful and contributing members to society.

Youth Challenge benefits our community in many ways. This award-winning program has been recognized as one of the nation's most effective and cost-efficient programs for targeting youth who are at the greatest risk for substance abuse, teen pregnancy, delinquency, and criminal activity. Youth Challenge performs tens of thousands of volunteer work hours to benefit communities around the island providing the youth the opportunity to learn the value of public service and become stewards of their community. Youth Challenge is a key supporter and participates alongside numerous other organizations, non-profit partners, and labor unions in the semi-annual Nā Leo O Nā 'Ōpio Career Opportunities Expo, which is one of the longest running and largest career fairs on the island, supporting over two thousand youth grades 5-12 from across the island.

Continued funding for this program is necessary. Hundreds of youth who did not succeed in traditional forms of education succeeded with the help of Youth Challenge. The County of Hawai'i Office of the Prosecuting Attorney supports the passage of House Bill No. 835 HD2 and

the ongoing operations of Youth Challenge. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

**HB-835-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/12/2021 3:01:35 PM

Testimony for PSM on 3/16/2021 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I strongly support HB835. Please pass this bill so funds are appropriated to support the ongoing operations of the Hawaii national guard youth challenge program. Thank you.

Mike Golojuch, Sr., Lt Col, USAF(Ret)

Veterans Caucus Member, DPH

**HB-835-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/14/2021 8:35:27 PM

Testimony for PSM on 3/16/2021 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Robert Lee	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

Why is the Hilo Youth Challenge Program shutting down? This funding bill should fund the Hilo and Kapolei campus. With the recent federal COVID relief funding, there is no need to cut back the Hilo campus. Fund it all since the State will receive \$3 from the Feds for \$1 of costs spent by the State.

You have much testimony from the Hilo community how this program have turned at risk kids around. We need to save more of these kids, not less.

Thanks,  
Robert G.F. Lee  
Major General (US Army Retired) Adjutant General 2003-2011

**HB-835-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/14/2021 5:59:54 AM

Testimony for PSM on 3/16/2021 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Mike Vincent	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Chair Nishihara, Vice Chair English, and members of the Committee:

I strongly support full funding of the Hawaii National Guard Youth CHalleNGe Academy.

The purpose of this bill is to appropriate funds to support the operation of the Youth CHalleNGe Academy.

Everyone understands that budgets are tight but full funding the Youth CHalleNGe Academy should rank very high on the Legislature's funding priorities because it is absolutely the best program in Hawaii to help our at promise youth (most call them at-risk) for a much lower cost than any other program funded or supported by the Legislature. There is no other program in Hawaii more successful in helping at promise youth and there is no program that is more economical to the taxpayers of the state

Most of the youth entering the Academy are statistically destined for a life of struggles, failure, employment difficulties, poverty, substance abuse, or prison. Many have been written off by society and those around them. Virtually all of them are repeatedly in trouble of various degrees, many have been arrested, and some of them have spent time in youth correctional facilities. All of them have one thing in common: they see themselves as nothing but failure, have no vision of a bright and positive future, have no idea who or what they can become, or that they have the potential to be truly great in all they do. They come to the program hobbled with the chains of a slave burdened with baggage filled with trials, challenges, and pain. The program frees them, gives them the gift of vision, helps them see their true potential, and gives them the tools to overcome any challenge and succeed in all they do. If they can dream it, they can believe it, and they can achieve it.

With a complete success rate of over 90% of the cadets who successfully graduate, there is no program, club, church, or organization of any type that is more successful than the Youth CHalleNGe Academy at helping these youth see that they are in control of their future, that they determine who and what they will become, and most importantly that they have the capabilities to be greater than they will ever see themselves. The benefits of this program to these youth, their families, their friends, our community, and anyone who comes in contact with any graduate throughout their lives are

immeasurable and incalculable as the benefits from this single program exponentially impact generations for each graduate.

From a fiscal standpoint, supporting full funding of the Youth CHalleNGe Academy makes complete sense. This program is a no-cost program to participants and their families, but the real benefit to the taxpayer is the majority of the program costs are provided by the United States Department of Defense on a 75% federal and 25% State matching basis. In short, the taxpayers only need to fund 25% of the costs of the program. The Legislature funds various programs to benefit the community and youth struggling with challenges of life, but none of them come close to the economic benefit of funding the Youth CHalleNGe Academy. This benefit goes beyond the costs of the Program when the immeasurable benefits are taken into consideration.

I have had the privilege of association with this program from its inception and early days in Waimanalo. There is no better program in Hawaii and the Hawaii Youth CHalleNGe Academy is one of the best in the country. I strongly support full Legislative support of funding for the Youth CHalleNGe Academy so that the Department of Defense can have full resources to operate and determine the full future of the program.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

**HB-835-HD-2**

Submitted on: 3/15/2021 11:42:23 AM

Testimony for PSM on 3/16/2021 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
cheryl B.	Individual	Comments	No

Comments:

Comments

It's interesting to note that small specific groups can get their bills continued through the legislature while bills that affect larger groups, such as the menstrual bill can not get a hearing. Is there a criteria or does it always come down to the chair's discretion? Perhaps that's a path the legislature should look in to?